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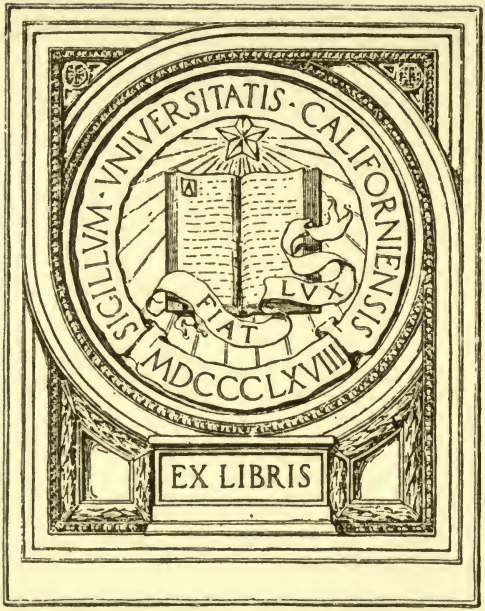
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A WAYSIDE LUTE

Lydia Is Gone This Many a Year was printed originally in *Harper's; The Lark, The Dust, A Christmas Folk-Song* in *Lippincott's;* other poems in *Scribner's, The Independent,* etc.: for their inclusion in this volume the author desires to acknowledge the courtesy of the publishers.

A WAYSIDE LUTE BY LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS B MOSHER
MDCCCCIX

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1909

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MAIN

TO THE MEMORY
OF
EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN
DEAR FRIEND

House, how still you are;
Hearth, how cold!
He was vital as a star,
As the April mold.
Friend and singer, lad and knight,
Very dear;—
Hearts, how bare the dark, the light,
Since he is not here!

June 15, 1909.

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A WAYSIDE LUTE

TO-DAY

IS there but emptiness from sky to sky;
A hollow where we pass,
Along the simple grass?
Stirs not some intimate foot as we draw nigh?
Or is To-Day grown but a lantern light,
That throws at the dark's edge,
Upon some village hedge,
A petty red, then dwindles into night?

The House decays, but in the April rain,
Long after, where it stood,
Betwixt the sea and wood,
Purple as yore, its violets remain.
Long after, hoarded in the ancestral town,
The new folk find it there,
In carvèd shelf or chair,
Or candlesticks whose gilt is turning brown.

Thus is it with our Pasts; they go; they stay;
They go, yet leave behind,
Some wealth, dear, starry, kind,
For common folk to gather day by day:

There is no moment which dies unforgot;
For when the last is flown,
The very churls do own,
More wars than Troy, more towers than Camelot.

Yet not alone the vanished years are fair;
There are two spirits keep,
Where men do work or sleep,
Down rutty lane, or in the roof-girt square;
Their looks are gentle, for they come to bless;
With brooding eyes they see,
The Best for you and me;
And one is Awe and one is Loveliness.

From wonder unto wonder do we go;
Faiths, fervors, quests, desires,
Youth's brief entrancing fires,
The deeper moods of deeper years we know;
We need but lift our bare, expectant hands;
The mists break and are gone;
Sounds, scents, visions of dawn
Surge toward us from the old, unalien lands.

The wonder of this life that hurries by! —
Loves, wrecks, deceits, and woes,
Pomps, marketings and shows,
So close to earth, yet closer to the sky.
This you and I — forgetting and forgot;
Yet shall we plan, dream, slay,
Or, sudden on a day,
Grasp at the wheeling suns and perish not.

This mystery forever at the door! —
Familiar as the air,
And sacred as a prayer,
Forever new and yet forever hoar —
This you and I — blown past the village pane,
And down to darkness thrust,
A little simple dust,
That still shall rise and serve its God again.

What go into the making of a song?
A thousand years agone,
And more that are to dawn,
And this one moment pulsing strange and strong;
And every moment, be it near or far,
Joy-lit, or drab with woe,
And every great and low,
The rose, the worm, the tempest, and the star.

The cry of Sorrow gathering her sheaves;
The laughter full and low,
Of the rude folk that sow,
A windy hour under thin country eaves;
The shout of Singers marching in their might,
To viol and to horn,
Far up the steeps of morn,
To the white levels of perpetual light.

First love, that in the young days has us thrall;
The festival; the flower;
The wet, autumnal hour;
The last fight waging by the broken wall —

These, these and more. For hark! all wrong, all right;
The fear that drove men back,
The dream along the track,
The foot that slipped, the heart that took the height!

Oh, wonder of a song! Along it pour
A thousand years to be,
The fair, the rude, the free,
Like wind adown the hollow of a shore:
Out of their heart shall come a kindlier Plan;
Out of our fathers' creeds,
A better for our needs,
Out of the ancestral throng a nobler Man.

Oh, life! oh, song! Oh, the long awe of spring!
A little shines the light;
Then lo, to left, to right,
Across the garden flags some baffling thing! —
See the round scarlet leap from April clod:
Empty we turn away,
Dared by that bit of clay;
For tulips still are tulips, God still God.

Some ancient sense of Beauty haunts us still;
The pangs of Life and Art,
Lie sharp about the heart;
Sudden we feel the unescapable thrill:
One instant naught — the next, a pageant nigh!
Out in the naked street,
The sound of lonely feet;
In ordered splendor all our dreams march by.

A book can hold us, or a snatch of sea,
Or lilies by a wall;
A comrade at dewfall,
Can from his violin such chords set free,
To such quick, searching notes give instant tongue,
To woods, darks, sailing ships;
The sobs start to our lips —
How long, how long it is since we were young!

He plays. Under the clear and ruddy sky,
And there in the dewfall,
The oldest things of all,
Go gleaming past, and as they go, they cry —
Love, Longing, Tears, and gray Remembering;
A foot, a voice, a face! —
And there, in some dim place,
The little honey-colored flowers of spring.

To every age some mystery all its own,
That makes its dullest air,
A something hushed and fair;
Down every age some breath of Beauty blown;
Each day is but a pool within the grass,
A haunted, gusty thing,
Of ancient fashioning,
Where earth and heaven do meet as in a glass.

THE HOUSE OF THE SILENT YEARS

THE Silent House it standeth wide,—
Yea, open is the door;
The winds of Peace from every side
Blow round it evermore.

Unhewn of axe, unmade of hands,
Its walls so broad and still;
Like to a sea the pale gray lands
Flow up to the gray sill.

Candle were vain, and sun but dim,
For here the dark doth cease;
Nor drink nor meat is spread for him
Who suppeth here with Peace.

Arrows speed not, nor hurtling spear,
Nor plague cometh to slay;
Viol and rebec make no cheer,
For Song hath had his day.

Grief shattereth here his weary cup;
No watch the hours do keep
That they may call the red East up,
Or soothe the West to sleep.

Fashions, desires, dreams, swarming fears,
Fade past the threshold gray;
One day is as a thousand years,
A thousand years one day.

HERBS

A SERVICEABLE thing
Is fennel, mint, or balm,
Kept in the thrifty calm
Of hollows, in the spring;
Or by old houses pent.
Dear is its ancient scent
To folk that love the days forgot,
Nor think that God is not.

Sage, lavender, and rue,
For body's hurt and ill,
For fever and for chill;
Rosemary, strange with dew,
For sorrow and its smart,
For breaking of the heart.
Yet pain, dearth, tears, all come to dust,
As even the herbs must.

Life-everlasting, too,
Windless, poignant, and sere,
That blows in the old year,
Townsmen, for me and you.
Why fret for wafting airs?
Why haste to sell our wares?
Captains and clerks, this shall befall;
This is the end of all.

Oh, this the end indeed!
Oh, unforgotten things,

Gone out of all the springs;
The quest, the dream, the creed!
Gone out of all the lands,
And yet safe in God's hands; —
For shall the dull herbs live again,
And not the sons of men?

SPICEWOOD

THE spicewood burns along the gray, spent sky,
In moist, unchimneyed places, in a wind,
That whips it all before, and all behind,
Into one thick, rude flame, now low, now high.
It is the first, the homeliest thing of all —
At sight of it, the lad that by it fares,
Whistles afresh his foolish town-caught airs —
A thing so honey-colored and so tall!
It is as though the young Year, ere he pass,
To the white riot of the cherry tree,
Would fain accustom us, or here, or there,
To his new sudden ways with bough and grass,
So starts with what is humble, plain to see,
And all familiar as a cup, a chair.

THE COOL OF EVENING

THE wind is low in air,
And shakes the box-tree bare
Of spice, long hoarded there;
Cut black against the orange sky,
Two neighbors hurry by.

The door 's ajar. I see
The table set for me,
My mother in her chair
Ready to say the prayer.

In journeyings to and fro
Our poor wild lives do go —
Then wind, scent, flare of sky,
The cool of evening nigh;
Roof, loaf, the fond word said —
Then afterward to bed.

BY THE RIVER

(" *Vengeance of Jenny's case! Fie on her! Never name her, child!*") MRS. QUICKLY

DAY-LONG the market wains,
In faded rows creak out the lanes,
And past that house she knew;
Blue, scarlet flowers without stint,
Crowd the thin yard. The tang of mint,
Clings to one's skirts the whole day through.

The villagers here and there
Remember yet that she was fair;
Sudden, in April's chill,
Her mother hears her step about,
And turns, and lo, the lilacs out,
But all the house grown dully still!

A child's mug, prinked with gold,
A ribbon with its rose turned old,
Gray hymns, wrapped all in lawn —
She keeps them there in cupboard fast,
And wonders dimly o'er the last,
How she who sang them, could have gone.

Her father, his work done,
And sheds made fast at set of sun,
Dumb in the household stir,
Looks past his proper daughters there,

Where sits his wife, dumb in her chair,
And knows they both think but of her.

The youngest of the girls,
Shy-bosomed thing of combs and curls,
Shaken dimly to and fro,
Stares in her glass, as if that she,
That fair face in her own might see,
That star which set so long ago.

And thus the days have gone,
And thus shall go from dawn to dawn —
This water lapping by,
Black wharf, sad town, they shall not know,
Or this stark woman drifting slow —
Who might be you, who might be I.

THE DUST

THE dust blows up and down
Within the lonely town;
Vague, hurrying, dumb, aloof,
On sill and bough and roof.

What cloudy shapes do fleet
Along the parchèd street;
Clerks, bishops, kings go by —
To-morrow so shall I!

TEARS

WHEN I consider Life and its few years —
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street —
I wonder at the idleness of tears.
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftains, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep;
Homer his sight, David his little lad!

THE GHOSTLY MAYERS

OH, who will take the road with me at breaking of the day!
The road with me, the road with me this morning of the May!
This morning of the May indeed when scarlet burns the pane,
And cherry bloom drops in the wind a mile along the lane.

Scarce do I call but they are come as hurrying as the wind;
Scarce do I call but fleet of foot they come full soft behind;
Oho, the ancient Maying folk, the Mayers high and low,
That all betwixt the rocking white, the dropping white do go!

A shadowy folk with reed at lip they take the swaying grass;
And they do have the scarlet pane for candle as they pass;
Now piping loud, now piping low, all cloudy in the light,
They take the swaying grass betwixt the rocking, dropping white.

One smacks of Essex, one of Kent; one smacks of Warwick's town,
And when he blows what can they do but hush them up and down;
And one has naught to tell him by save a long daffodil,
He plucked a many a year agone upon a Devon hill.

The village folk they do not know, at breaking of the day,
As down their simple lanes I go, this morning of the May,
What Presences fare on behind betwixt the trees so tall,
The rocking white, the dropping white, a mile along the wall.

LYDIA IS GONE THIS MANY A YEAR

LYDIA is gone this many a year,
Yet when the lilacs stir,
In the old gardens far or near,
The house is full of her.

They climb the twisted chamber stair;
Her picture haunts the room;
On the carved shelf beneath it there,
They heap the purple bloom.

A ghost so long has Lydia been,
Her cloak upon the wall,
Broidered, and gilt, and faded green,
Seems not her cloak at all.

The book, the box on mantel laid,
The shells in a pale row,
Are those of some dim little maid,
A thousand years ago.

And yet the house is full of her;
She goes and comes again;
And longings thrill, and memories stir,
Like lilacs in the rain.

Out in their yards the neighbors walk,
Among the blossoms tall;
Of Anne, of Phyllis, do they talk,
Of Lydia not at all.

WRIT IN A BOOK OF WELSH VERSE

THIS is the house where I was bred:
The wind blows through it without stint,
The wind bitten by the roadside mint;
Here brake I loaf, here climbed to bed.

The fuchsia on the window sill;
Even the candlesticks a-row,
Wrought by grave men so long ago —
I loved them once, I love them still.

Southward and westward a great sky! —
The throb of sea within mine ear —
Then something different, more near,
As though a wistful foot went by.

Ghost of a ghost down all the years! —
In low-roofed room, at turn of stair,
At table-setting, and at prayer,
Old wars, old hungers, and old tears!

TO ART

WHAT are thine ends? To idle at the door,
The while the wharves call and the ships go by;
Set sail and drift under an April sky,
A curious mariner from shore to shore?
To strip from woodland pool the pipe of yore,
Bursting with many a high, sweet, ancient air,
And shrilling down the country highways fare? —
Son of the gods, and hast thou nothing more!
Storm through the tides, unheeding wreck or night,
Lord of the chart, the track, lord of thy fears,
Fling to the gust the reed of weathers slight;
Blood of our blood, and kin to all our tears,
Cry through the dark, and drive the world to light;
Strike at the heart of time, and rouse the years.

THE CRY OF THE OLD HOUSE

COME back!
My little lads, come back!
My little maids, with starchèd frocks;
My lads, my maids, come back!
The poplar trees are black
Against the keen, lone, throbbing sky;
The tang of the old box
Fills the clear dusk from wall to wall,
And the dews fall.
I watch, I cry:
Leave the rude wharf, the mart;
Come back!
Else shall I break my heart.

Am I forgot;
My days as they were not?—
The warm, sweet, crooning tunes;
The Sunday afternoons,
Wrought but for you;
The larkspurs growing tall,
You wreathed in pink and blue,
Within your prayer-books small;
The cupboards carved both in and out,
With curious, prickly vine,
And smelling far and fine;
The pictures in a row,
Of folk you did not know;
The toys, the games, the shrill, gay rout;

The lanterns, that at hour for bed,
A charmed, but homely red
Went flickering from shed to shed;
The fagots crumbling, spicy, good,
Brought in from the great wood;
The Dark that held you all about;
The grave, white Shapes blown to and fro,
The Wind that would not go? —
Come back, my women and my men,
And take them all again!

Not yet, not yet,
Can you forget —
For you that are a man,
You battle not or reap, you dream nor plan;
And you, so gray of look,
You cannot pluck a rose, or read a book,
Do aught for faith, or fame, or tears,
But I am there with all my years.
Oh, one and all,
When at the evenfall,
Your slim girls sing out on the stair,
Lo, I am there!
When blow the cherry boughs so fair
Athwart your slender town yards far away,
Lo, all at once you have no word to say;
For at your throat a sharp, strange thing —
An old house set in an old spring!

Come back!
Come up the still and wistful lands,

The poplar-haunted lands.
You need not call,
For I shall know,
And light the candles tall,
Set wine and loaf a-row.
Come back!
Unlatch the door,
And fall upon my heart once more.

For I shall comfort you, oh, lad;
Oh, daughter, I shall make you wholly glad!
The wreck, the wrong,
The unavailing throng,
The sting, the smart,
Shall be as they were not,
Forgot, forgot!
Come back,
And fall upon my heart!

SLEEP.
Now that the charge is won,
Sleep in the narrow clod;
Now it is set of sun,
Sleep till the trump of God.
Sleep.

Sleep.
Fame is a bugle call
Blown past a crumbling wall;
Battles are clean forgot;
Captains and towns are not:
Sleep shall outlast them all.
Sleep.

IN PRAISE OF COMMON THINGS

FOR stock and stone;
For grass, and pool; for quince tree blown
A virginal white in spring;
And for the wall beside,
Gray, gentle, wide;
For roof, loaf, everything,
I praise Thee, Lord;
For toil, and ache, and strife,
And all the commonness of life.

Hearty, yet dim,
Like country voices in a hymn,
The things a house can hold;
The memories in the air;
And down the stair
Fond footsteps known of old;
The chair, the book or two;
The little bowl of white and blue.

What would it be,
If loveliness were far from me?
A staff I could not take,
To hurry up and down,
From field to town;
Needs would my wild heart break;
Or, I would vacant go,
And, being naught, to nothing grow.

This is the best:
My little road from east to west,
The breadth of a man's hand,
Not from the sky too far,
Nor any star,
Runs through the unwalled land;
From common things that be,
Is it but a step to run to Thee.

OH GRAY AND TENDER IS THE RAIN

OH, gray and tender is the rain,
That drips, drips on the pane!
A hundred things come in the door,
The scent of herbs, the thought of yore.

I see the pool out in the grass,
A bit of broken glass;
The red flags running wet and straight,
Down to the little flapping gate.

Lombardy poplars tall and three,
Across the road I see;
There is no loveliness so plain
As a tall poplar in the rain.

But oh, the hundred things and more,
That come in at the door! —
The smack of mint, old joy, old pain,
Caught in the gray and tender rain.

AFTER

OH, the littles that remain!
Scent of mint out in the lane;
Flare of window; sound of bees;—
These, but these.

Three times sitting down to bread;
One time climbing up to bed;
Table-setting o'er and o'er;
Drying herbs for winter's store;
This thing; that thing;—nothing more.

But just now out in the lane,
Oh, the scent of mint was plain!

THE VALENTINE

AGAINST this thorny Present shows
Your memory like the dew;
Each maid a wrinkled Beauty goes,
When I do think of you.

Folded away in the deep grass,
What is it can befall?
Nor Clouds that fade, nor Gusts that pass,
Nor any Grief at all.

Now lovers write their verses brave;
Now buds start on the tree;
But Love went with you to the grave,
The sere leaf bides with me.

I have not any word save this;
My tears are all my store;
The fairer that the weather is
I miss you but the more.

GRAY sky; gray lane;
A flaw of rain;
Loud crows midway in air,
That go, and leave it bare.

But whence,
By the torn fence,
This hushèd thing with shape of flame?
And whither came,
This yellow gust blown down the grass
Of Hallowmas?

Holds the old Year, remembering,
A moment of last spring?
Or, far beyond this weather vext,
A moment of the next?
Holds he the twain in one,
The April gone, the April not begun?—
In these dim stalks, wind-lapped and bright,
Driven all one way like candlelight?

THE LARK

(SALISBURY, ENGLAND)

A CLOSE gray sky,
And poplars gray and high,
The country-side along;
The steeple bold
Across the acres old—
And then a song!

Oh, far, far, far,
As any spire or star,
Beyond the cloistered wall!
Oh, high, high, high,
A heart-throb in the sky—
Then not at all!

A CHRISTMAS FOLK-SONG

THE little Jesus came to town;
The wind blew up, the wind blew down;
Out in the street the wind was bold;
Now who would house Him from the cold?

Then opened wide a stable door,
Fair were the rushes on the floor;
The Ox put forth a hornèd head:
"Come, little Lord, here make Thy bed."

Uprose the Sheep were folded near:
"Thou Lamb of God, come, enter here."
He entered there to rush and reed,
Who was the Lamb of God indeed.

The little Jesus came to town;
With ox and sheep He laid Him down;
Peace to the byre, peace to the fold,
For that they housed Him from the cold!

THE room was low and small and kind;
And in its cupboard old,
The shells were set out to my mind;
The cups I loved with rims of gold.

Then, with that good gift which she had,
My mother showed at will,
David, the ruddy Syrian lad,
With his few sheep upon a hill;

A shop down a rude country street,
The chips strewn on the floor,
And faintly keen across the heat;
The simple kinsfolk at the door;

Mary amid the homely din,
As slim as violet;
The little Jesus just within,
About His father's business set.

My mother rose, and then I knew
As she stood smiling there,
Her gown was of that gentle blue
Which she had made the Virgin wear.

How far the very chairs were grown!
The gilt rose on each back,
Into a Syrian rose was blown,
And not our humble gold and black.

That week long, in our acres old,
Lad David did I see;
From out our cups with rims of gold,
The little Jesus supped with me.

SPINNING TOPS

ALL day, all day, the village lads are out —
It is so pleasant and so clear a weather —
And my lad, too, is somewhere thereabout;
For as of old they spin their tops together.
Out past the ivied fences do they crowd;
I hear their shouts, now one, and now another;
But his above them all, so sweetly loud;
They hear it not — but I, I am his mother.
A cloudy thing, I see him in the sun,
That little lad, so long and long forgot,
By other lads in this and any weather:
And still he keeps his playtimes one by one;
And still, although his neighbors know it not,
Day-long, week-long, they spin their tops together.

THE MYSTERY

AS up and down the world I go,
All ancient do the places show;
The gardens full of honey bees,
The roofs, the high and windy trees.

April begins. The half-grown pear,
Out in the lane buds white and fair;
Long since — for I can see it plain —
It blossomed in just such a lane.

This tender light upon the glass,
Long since I saw across the grass,
Perhaps in Rouen, perhaps in Rome;
Where'er — I know that it was home.

GOOD FRIDAY

PETER and James and John,
The sad tale runneth on —
All slept and Thee forgot;
One said he knew Thee not.

Peter and James and John,
The sad tale runneth on —
I am that one, the three;
Thus have I done to Thee.

Under a garden wall,
I lay at evenfall;
I waked. Thou calledst me;
I had not watched with Thee.

Peter and James and John,
The sad tale runneth on —
By the priest's fagot hot,
I said I knew Thee not.

The little maid spake out:
"With Him thou wentest about."
"This Man I never met — "
I hear the cock crow yet.

THE CHERRY BOUGHS

OH, now the heavenly cherry boughs,
That are so good to know!
Oh, now the haunting cherry boughs,
Straight up to God they go!

And now that stilly foot I hear,
A-following through the trees;
And in the stopping of the wind,
The little, wrangling bees.

The world is but a gray, gray dust,
Beaten past me small and thin:
And life this space blown clear of all
Except the Once Has Been.

Under the cherry boughs it stands
So stilly and so kind;
And I can hear it following
In the stopping of the wind.

THE sun blown out;
The dusk about:
Fence, roof, tree — here or there,
Wedged fast in the drab air;
A pool vacant with sky,
That stares up like an eye.

Nothing can happen. All is done —
The quest to fare,
The race to run —
The house sodden with years,
And bare
Even of tears.

A cry!
From out the hostelries of sky,
And down the gray wind blown;
Rude, innocent, alone.

Now, in the west, long sere,
An orange thread, the length of spear;
It glows;
It grows;
The flagons of the air
Drip color everywhere:
The village — fence, roof, tree —
From the lapsed dusk pulls free,
And shows

A rich, still, unforgotten place;
Each window square,
Yellow for yellow renders back;
The pool puts off its foolish face;
The wagon track
Crooks past lank garden-plot,
To Rome, to Camelot.

A cry!

THE UNFORGOTTEN THINGS

WHAT are the unforgotten things, my heart?
In what guise do they come, in what strange way
Knock at the door, and enter in and stay,
Of our small hour the near, the poignant part? —
A sound, an odor, trick of sun and air;
Left from a song the little, sobbing note;
The yellow of a flower quick at the throat —
Of all our years, of all our tears a share.
No need for quest — they are forever nigh;
Out of the night, out of the noon they start;
Their steps do follow, follow through the grass;
Their hands touch ours, and eye looks into eye;
Outlasting years and tears, my heart, my heart! —
Broken into dust their ancient lovers pass.

THE SHADOW ON THE DIAL

GOD set the sun in the sky;
Out of the sun came I;
A shadow, yet I show
How long it takes a rose to grow.

THE WAYFARER

THERE is but little that I know,
A wayfarer blown to and fro;
Spheres, empires, gods go down the wind:
But these are what they leave behind —

The common toils, the village mirth;
The fagot crackling on the hearth;
The wind, the sun, the frost, the dew;
The roadside grass with flower of blue.

There is but little that I know,
A wayfarer blown to and fro;
Beauty is not kept on a shelf,
For grudging dole; God gives Himself.

Without the village fences pent,
Such purple and such pink are spent,
That we should pray to be indeed,
Humble and lovely as a weed.

Life is but a small rainy day
Betwixt two dusks; but in its gray
Enough of light for me, for you
Our something or our naught to do.

There is but little that I know,
A wayfarer blown to and fro;
Now this the sum of our deserts:
We sow our healings and our hurts.

And ever is there chance to run
A somewhat nearer to the sun;
Out of our very shames to press
Unto the skirts of righteousness.

Life ends. For us and all our kind,
Enough of light a roof to find;
And after, long and long to see,
That Love has never let us be.

THE PLOWMAN

THE delicate gray trees stand up
There by the fencèd ways;
One or two are crimson-tipped,
And soon will start to blaze.

The plowman follows, as of yore,
Along the furrows cold,
Homeric shape against the boughs;
Sharp is the air with mold.

The sweating horses heave and strain;
The crows with thick, high note
Break black across the windless land,
Fade off and are remote.

Oh, new days, yet long known and old!
Lo, as we look about,
This immemorial act of faith,
That takes the heart from doubt!

Kingdoms decay and creeds are not,
Yet still the plowman goes
Down the spring fields, so he may make
Ready for him that sows.

SASSAFRAS

OH, here's, oh, here's your sassafras!—
Across the stall, (as I did pass),—
Lo, in small bundles red and lone,
The savory woodland stuff was shown!
Here's sassafras!

Here country memories to buy!
Here Tyre and Nineveh and Rome;
And youth, spice-laden, going by
When the round sun is low in sky,
And home, home!

I had not thought it long ago,
Since we came home across the grass—
But just a yesterday or so—
Till that call shook me to and fro;
Here's sassafras!

THE FOLD

A BARE, crooked wisp, that the thin hollows hold,
A mile past village chimneys, does it stand,
Wind-bitten in the alway windy land;
Bare, crooked, bitten by the wind — and yet a fold —
And there the shepherd, at the wane of light,
Drives all his master's sheep; aye, in the hour,
When that the sky is like a crocus flower,
And folk do make them ready for the night.
So gentle is he with each little one,
And with the old, so careful and so slow —
They are withal so safe where they do keep —
What better than to find, at set of sun,
A shepherd, a walled space where I could go,
And house me from the wind like any sheep?

THE YOUNG MOTHER

THE Host lifts high the candlelight —
"Out in the dark who waits before?
Now who is this at mid of night,
Comes faring to my door?"

With rushes is the chamber set;
The house is sweet without, within;
For it may be she will forget
The place where she hath been.

But lonely, lonely in the room,
With strange eyes looks she all about;
She sees the broken boughs in bloom,
The red wine pourèd out.

They crowd around her where she stands,
The children and the elders there;
They put the cup within her hands;
They break the loaf so fair.

Oh, what to her that they are kind!
Oh, let the tears come like a tide!
She cannot keep from out her mind
The son for whom she died!

HOMESICK

(ON A RAINY DAY)

OH, tell me not of any mirth;
I know them all by heart —
Fond laughter wavering by the hearth,
Shrill songs of field and cart.

Oh, tell me not of any grief,
For I do know them all —
Slim, empty chambers, wane of leaf,
And tears, tears that befall.

Oh, tell me not of beauty's glass,
I know it through and through;
Old loves, each flower within the grass,
Is fashioned like to you.

Jest, weeping, daring beauty, too,
Starlight and jocund dawn;
I learned them everyone from you,
That now are lost and gone.

Old loves, old house worn dear and thin,
One thing is left of all; —
I hear the little rains begin
Along the orchard wall.

THE STUBBLE

IS this sad void all that is left of Spring,
Of fire and dream, of quick and delicate days?
And must all they who pass along these ways,
Come to this silence of remembering?
I, too, in the young year have had a part;
Once was it hard to doubt as hard to grieve;
So easy once, so easy to believe! —
Now all my harvest is a troubled heart.
Yet has not doubt its place, and so its right?
Its dreams and visions, faint but unforgot?
Its longing mood whence breaks some sure, glad thing,
Higher than shrine, or star, or evenlight?
Lord of the stubble, though I see Thee not,
About me sounds the Rumor of the Spring!

A LITTLE SONG OF LIFE

GLAD that I live am I;
That the sky is blue;
Glad for the country lanes,
And the fall of dew.

After the sun the rain;
After the rain the sun;
This is the way of life,
Till the work be done.

All that we need to do,
Be we low or high,
Is to see that we grow
Nearer the sky.

COMING BACK

I DARESAY if I were to tell,
What I do miss or here or there,
In this old town I love so well —
What shrill of laughter down the air!

Each door was wide and painted white;
And every day its plate of brass,
A small maid-servant polished bright,
Until it shone like any glass.

Each Covenanter name stood plain,
A mellow mouthful, yet pricked through
With fighting yesters, heard again
Like clash of spears across the dew.

A hundred things and more are gone
In this old town where'er I pass;
But most of all, from dawn to dawn,
I miss the little plates of brass!

THE THREE WREATHS

THREE wreaths make I in the wood,
Of the white herb that I should,
Of the sad herb growing tall
By a gusty country wall.

One is for a graybeard dead
Many an autumn come and fled;
One for a hand's length of mold
Covering a head of gold.

One for Long Since. This I make
With my very heart a-break;—
Listen to that footstep pass,
Down the wind of Hallowmas!

THE DAFFODILS

NOW through the April land doth pass,
As through the slim, Sicilian grass,
The Vision of the Daffodils —
Persephone! Persephone!
And ever still *Persephone!*
This antique cry the weather fills.

It is the old mood of the spring,
A sweet and a heart-breaking thing —
The budding joy, the vanished good;
For, though we pluck the daffodils,
Or walk with laughter on the hills,
Yet go we empty through the wood!

THE ROOM

TOWNS, lovers, quarrels, bloom —
All change from day to day,
But not that stedfast room,
Far and far away.

The stiff chairs ranged around,
The blue jar flowered wide,
The quick, close, racing sound
Of poplar trees outside —

I daresay all are there;
There still two pictures keep —
The girl so tall and fair;
Christ with His foolish sheep.

THE CRAB APPLE TREE

OH, solitary, blow!
Color of rose and snow;
Blow, strange, new-budded tree,
All vagrant with the bee.

Oh, dear for old-time's sake!
Oh, dear for old heart-break!
Fair boughs of April-tide,
Fair boughs by the roadside.

NOW, who are these out in the night,
Blown naked in the worrying gust?
Gray mist across your candlelight,
Mean shapes along the unresting dust?

These are the Hunted Ones you see,
Who tireless speed from land to land;
Freemen who would that you were free;
Hark to the Hunters close at hand!

A halt, a call, an edgèd cry—
But not a foot stirs on the floor;
"Follow and dream; follow and die!"—
Untouched the latch upon the door.

Mean shapes from all the dark apart,
Gray mist across your candlelight,
We stir, we shake you to the heart;
And then are gone into the night.

Out in your orchards in the sun,
You count the rosy harvests nigh;
A gasping few, and one by one,
Without the walls we pass you by.

Thin laughter dwindles down the grass;
You jeer, though scarce you know at what;
You point gross fingers where we pass;
The dust dies out; we are forgot.

We come and go; we come again;
  Nor loaf, nor cloak your dole, nor shed
Wherein to house us from the rain;
  Nor of one bough the apples red.

A hundred towns to east, to west,
  Scatter our ashes to the wind;
Ever we speed upon the quest;
  Ever the Hunters ride behind.

Thin laughter, cackle or grow still;
  Cold doors, unbar or shut us out;
We are of them that do God's will;
  The Hunt shall end in wreck and rout!

FOR A GUEST CHAMBER

LANES down which they drive the kine;
Fields where they do plow;
Orchards — flagons of old wine —
Be remembered now.

Think of gardens full of bees;
Gusts that fleeting pass;
Think of tall laburnum trees,
Blazing in the grass.

Noise and rout are folded up;
Only Sleep is here:
Sleep that comes with quiet cup;
Drink, oh, dearest dear!

Safe as dew, as clear of fret,
Then let Dark draw nigh;
For a candle God has set
Somewhere in the sky.

TO ONE LONG FORGOT

I WOULD not know you if you came —
(Think it no wrong!) —
The years have kept you from all blame,
So long, so long!

Once more the crocus flowers are set,
Lance-like and small,
Some yellow and some violet,
By the old wall.

Now, if at all, your ghost comes by,
In April air,
In the gray light of earth and sky,
And lingers there.

Yet were we lad and maid together;
So, of a truth,
Beside you walks in this dim weather,
Mine own lost youth.

Oh, two glad ghosts of long ago,
In this dim weather,
By the old wall you used to know,
You fare together!

THE LAST LOVER

IT is so late! Down all our days are set
November and the snows;
Yet now, when we are ready to forget,
For both has blown a rose.

Right well we know nor you nor I can make
A blaze of one lean spark;
And it were all in vain for us to take
This candle to the dark.

Now what, in truth, the fitting word to say,
And what the proper fate,
For growing red on a November day,
For being a rose so late?

Oh, must we pluck it, sweet though come to dust,
A moment hold it fast?
Or leave it to the gathering of the gust?—
A rose, but at the last!

THE BROKEN SOLDIERS

A SONG for the good fighting men,
That through the red dawn hurry by!
For tramp of hoofs from hill and fen;
For clash of spears from sky to sky!

The wars that left us all undone,
And stripped of each poor thing but breath,
Battle by battle shall be won,
And every foe thrust down to death.

For them the very stars shall quake;
For them the curving waters dry;
The abyss grow smooth; the crag-side make
A hundred paths along the sky.

But we, the broken soldiers, we,
Whom pipe and hearth do solace now,
Or when the warmer weathers be,
A bench beneath some thick-leaved bough—

How stirs that lost thing in our blood!
After so long the old desire!
The leaping breath, the primal mood,
After our lean years at the fire!

Then, for the pity of those years,
Our throats quick with some hard delight,
We cheer that company of spears,
Until it dwindles out of sight.

AN APRIL GHOST

ALL the ghosts I ever knew,
White, and thinly calling,
Come into the house with you,
When the dew is falling.

All of youth that ever died,
In the Springtime weather,
In the windy April tide,
Climb the dusk together.

For a moment, lad and maid
Stand up there all lonely;
In a moment fade and fade —
You are left, you only.

AT COCKCROW

THE stars are gone out spark by spark;
A cock crows; up the cloudy lane,
A cart toils creaking through the dark:
Lord, in Thy sight all roads are plain,
Or run they up or down,
Sheep-tracks, highways to town,
Or even that little one,
Beneath the hedge, where seldom falls the sun.

If it were light, I would go west;
I would go east across the land;
But it is dark; I needs must rest
Till morn breaks forth on every hand:
Lord, choose for me,
The road that runs to Thee.

HER SON

THE narrow poplars down her lane a-row,
That look so black and then so gusty white,
She hates the old and foolish way they grow;
Just now they hid him all too soon from sight.
But back into the house she needs must go,
To spread the board, prepare the meal aright,
The savory things that little lads love so —
Round cakes, spiced meat, and apples red and bright.
Oh dreams, but dreams! And but a sweet one, too,
That yester, till it turned too dark to see,
She fashioned a small garment for her lad —
That shadowy garment, with its sprig of blue: —
For long and long a barren mother she;
And this the little son she never had!

IN MEMORIAM

THE long day sped;
A roof; a bed;
No years;
No tears.

FINIS

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